The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

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DEAR MEMBER,

In spite of absorption in events nearer home, public opinion should be alive to what is happening in other parts of the world.

THE SITUATION IN THE FAR EAST

Recent events have brought again to the fore the question of the relations between this country and Japan. Welcome as improved relations would be from many points of view, it would be possible to pay too high a price for them. We must not allow ourselves to be driven by the pressure of business interests into a false position.

The British Government has proclaimed repeatedly that in this war we are standing for principles—for respect for agreements between nations as opposed to the reign of brute force and the claim of the strong to seize what they can. Though the Nazi rulers denounce this claim as mere hypocrisy, the majority of people in this country believe it to be justified. The principles may be put to the test in the policy adopted in the Far East and in other parts of the world. Japan has been engaged in China during the last two years in a policy of aggression and violence, and there is warm sympathy with the Chinese resistance which is still being stoutly maintained. It is obvious that there are diverse considerations which might govern British policy in this situation. It might be dictated exclusively by what are conceived to be immediate national interests. On the other hand, while taking account of national necessities, it might be consciously and resolutely directed to the maintenance of the principles which we profess and the furtherance of justice and fair dealing in international relations. If any action were taken by this country which made the task of the Chinese Government harder it would involve a sacrifice of principle to immediate self-interest incompatible with the moral claims which have been advanced in Europe. It would give a shock to the world and bring to very many of the best of our own youth, who are called to fight for what they hope, but are not yet quite confident, is a just cause, a disillusionment comparable with that which the Russo-German pact has brought to many adherents of the Communist and Nazi faiths.

Fortunately in Lord Halifax, in whose hands rests the guidance of our foreign policy, we have a man who, as his utterances show, is deeply alive to moral principle and its compelling power. It is essential that in his efforts to make this the basis of national policy he should have the effective support of public opinion, which cannot be too vigilant about the moral issues at stake in the Far East.

REBUILDING SOCIETY IN WEST CHINA

The war in China has compelled a number of the universities in the territory occupied by the Japanese to move to remoter parts of the country. The West China Christian University at Chengtu has been re-inforced by several other universities and colleges which have migrated to this centre. A body of teachers is thus assembled on one campus larger than has ever been available before. A vigorous attempt is being made under Christian inspiration to work out solutions for some of China's major problems. These include public health, public safety, agriculture, tanning and the improvement of the milk supply. Much study and effort is being devoted to helping the rural church to play its part in the new situation and to improve education in the country districts. In the midst of the surrounding war a new China is being brought to birth.

MR. CHURCHILL'S BROADCAST

I find on all hands disappointment and regret about Mr. Churchill's recent broadcast talk. It was a distinct lowering of the tone in which our statesmen have, up to the present, spoken of the war. War is a distasteful business, but when it has been entered upon it must be prosecuted with the utmost vigour. From this point of view Mr. Churchill's super-abundant vitality and energy are a national asset. But the conscience of a large section of the nation is so troubled by the enormity of war that they support it only because there seems no other way of preserving the decencies of life and the conditions which make possible relations of goodwill and co-operation between the nations. It means much, as I have indicated in the supplement, that the nation has until now been able to preserve an outlook more free from vindictiveness and hate than in any previous war. Nothing will do more to hold the nation together in the grim business in which, against our wills, we have been involved than that this attitude should be maintained. Any departure from it is bound to cause widespread disquiet. Moreover, utterances of the kind in question have the effect of rallying German opinion in support of their Government and consequently tend towards an unnecessary prolongation of the war.

THE CLAIMS OF TRUTH

I have a letter from the Headmistress of a Girls' School who is troubled about the attitude of her older girls. Her own generation at the same age was perhaps sentimentally patriotic. She feels, however, that with the present generation the balance has tipped too much the other way. Her girls consider it quite wrong to read the White Paper on German atrocities and tend to be sentimental about the Germans. This may be attributed in part, she thinks, to her own teaching about internationalism. But her present concern is that the girls appear to be unwilling to know about evil even when it is true, and she feels that her first task as an educator is to help her pupils to become seekers after truth. What she finds lacking is an understanding of the need at all costs to seek for and uphold truth. It would be interesting to know how far the existence of this state of mind accords with the experience of others of our members.

THE SUPPLEMENT

I intended to devote one of our early supplements to the question of peace aims, which our correspondence shows to be much in the minds of readers of the *News-*

Letter. I had the draft of an article on the subject, but when I sent it to some of our collaborators for criticism I found wide diversity in the understanding of the situation. It was evident that before any common mind could be reached there would have to be a good deal of hard thinking about fundamental questions. As a beginning in this process I have tried to distil from the letters I received some of the issues of central importance. A first draft of what appears in the supplement was once more submitted to a number of our collaborators and discussed personally with some of them. I owe much to their help and have borrowed freely from what they have written to me. But for the final form of the statement I am alone responsible.

SOME RELEVANT BOOKS

Let me recommend to your notice a little book that has just been published by one of our collaborators, Sir Alfred Zimmern. It is called *Spiritual Values and World Affairs,* and the publishers are the Oxford Press. It is the best treatment of the relation of Christianity to international affairs that I have seen. You may not agree with everything in it, any more than with what is said in the present supplement, but that is only to be expected in the discussion of large and profound questions. The important thing is that the book is a sincere and penetrating treatment of vital problems by one who has both reflected deeply on fundamental issues and studied closely the course of events.

A larger volume, which strongly reinforces at many points the line taken in the supplement, is Professor E. H. Carr's *The Twenty Years' Crisis,* which has just been published by Messrs. Macmillan. I read it only this week after the article was already in draft. Whether one agrees with the author or not, it is a book to be reckoned with.

On the important question on which I have touched in the supplement, What is it that makes a society cohere? I know nothing more illuminating and instructive than the pamphlet entitled *The Price of Liberty* by my friend Adolf Löwe, published by the Hogarth Press. It is a study of the forces which hold British society together by one who wrote as a foreigner but has now to our enrichment become one of ourselves.

Yours sincerely,

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The Universal Church.— A pastoral letter from the Archishops of Canterbury and York was read in the Anglican Churches last Sunday. It was a reminder of the reality and hope of the Universal Church and of the vital necessity of continuing support to the younger Churches overseas, which owe their existence to the missionary labours of the past century and " which are now growing into manhood as partners with us in the Universal Church." Lord Halifax, carrying as no other the daily burden and anxieties of world-wide responsibilities, wrote to *The Times* of the immense significance of the Christian Church throughout the world as providing "a common life in which peoples of all races may be united " and a school where " we can best learn many of the secrets essential to the building of the better world of our desires."

The Missions of the Continental Churches.— Dr. William Paton, Secretary of the International Missionary Council, writes as follows:

Many people will want to know what has happened to the German missions since the war broke out, and I am glad to be able to summarise the main facts. There are two separate problems—that of the German missions in British territory and that of the German missions in other lands, such as China and the Dutch Indies. Broadly speaking, the British Government has followed a single policy, namely, to prevent the work of the German missions from being broken up, and to intern only such persons as political necessity makes necessary. In Africa the general policy has been not to intern, except in some territories at the very beginning of the war, and the bulk of the German missionaries in Africa have been released on parole and are at work. The International Missionary Council has received a letter from one of the principal German missions in Tanganyika, giving a hopeful account of their own work and of the state of the African congregations. In India, where the total number of German nationals, refugees and others, is much larger, there has been a general internment of male missionaries, but the principle of discrimination is to be applied. In Palestine certain German missionaries essential to the carrying on of the important orphanage and hospital well known to visitors to Jerusalem have been allowed to continue their work. In all areas where German missionaries have been removed, provision for the work has been made by British, American, Swedish and other missions, which have helped both with money and with man-power. While the work has necessarily suffered to some extent, it has been maintained intact.

The situation of German missions in territories outside the British Empire is in some ways more serious, for all communications with Germany and the transmission of funds to the missions have been cut off. In South China and Sumatra the German missionaries are stranded without resources. The large Batak Church of Sumatra, of half a million Christians, whose grandfathers were cannibals, not only supports the whole of its own ministry, but is now trying to raise money for the maintenance of its German missionaries. The Christians of Holland and of America—notably the Lutherans—have raised money for assisting the German work.

These facts are a remarkable demonstration of the links which bind the Christians of the world. There is plainly a sense of obligation felt and accepted by the Christian community throughout the world to prevent any large part of the total mission work of the Church being crushed by the fact of war.

It is not only German missionary work which is affected by war. French military law has brought a considerable number of missionaries to the colours, though a number of them are now being allowed to return to their work.

The financial pressure of the war upon the small neutral countries affects missionary work in common with all other national activities. The great meeting held in Madras nearly a year ago was providential, since it greatly increased the sense of common responsibility and gave a stimulus to the younger churches everywhere to assume a more vigorous share in the work. The continuance of missionary interest among Christians in Germany is shown by the fact that the first edition of a volume descriptive of the Madras Conference has been sold out and another edition has just been published.

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PRELIMINARIES TO THE CONSIDERATION OF PEACE AIMS

THE papers for some weeks have been full of the discussion of war aims or peace aims. The *Picture Post* has helped towards an understanding of the state of public opinion by printing in successive issues these utterances of our political and intellectual leaders side by side.

These exhibit in some respects a remarkable degree of unanimity. There has probably never been a war in which in a belligerent country there has prevailed at the outset so much soberness of judgment, will for justice, recoil from war as a method of achieving political aims, absence of ill-will towards the enemy, concern for long-term interests and desire for a peace based on the co-operation of reconciled opponents in a new community of nations. The contrast with the prevailing sentiment in the last war is very striking. The present attitude, if it can be maintained in face of the frightfulness which would accompany the unloosing of war in all its fury, offers real promise for a better future, provided that it impels to action in the right direction.

But though the intentions are excellent, there is little evidence of an understanding of the real gravity of the situation. There is a danger of deluding ourselves with too easy solutions. War is so terrible an evil that we feel we must have some quick way of getting rid of it. The temptation to wishful thinking is almost irresistible. We seek in every direction for some short cut to a better world than that in which we live. But in the real world there are no short cuts. Salvation can be found only in getting rid of all illusions and coming face to face with realities. If we refuse to do this, the forces to which we have remained blind will frustrate our good intentions, and our efforts to save civilisation will miss their aim and may contribute to its more rapid decay.

To look reality in the face is often a bitter experience. But it may be the first step towards a real cure. Christians, in particular, need not be afraid to let illusions go. It is one of the distinguishing marks of Christianity that, in contrast with other systems of thought and life, it is opposed alike to a facile optimism which ignores the evil and suffering of human existence and to a despairing pessimism which seeks refuge in a flight from life. Our first task as Christians, therefore, in the present situation is to try to understand the world as it actually is.

THE PROBLEM OF POWER

The first question we have to face is the problem of power in politics. This involves a fundamental change in our traditional, deeply ingrained British habits of thought. These have been bred in us by the security we have long enjoyed. We have an inveterate tendency to gloss over realities. It flatters our self-esteem to lay down high, unassailable principles; but when the bill comes in we dispute the items.

Liberal thought in the nineteenth century to a large extent ignored the factor of power in the relations of human societies. It vastly over-estimated the influence of reason in human affairs. It failed to realise that all group life is based on the interplay of natural forces, which are only very imperfectly and by slow and painful effort brought under moral control.

The problem may be illustrated by reference to the British Empire. Like all political structures it rests on a basis of power. When its purposes are challenged that power is brought into play. It would be a fanciful misrepresentation of the

present conflict to regard it as a struggle between pure moral principles and power politics. To defend an empire is to be involved in power politics just as much as to endeavour to win one.

It is none the less true that in the history of the British Empire power has been increasingly subject to moral restraints and moral direction. From the days when Edmund Burke laid down the principle that "all political power which is set over men ought to be in some way or other exercised ultimately for their benefit," ideas of toleration, political liberty and self-government have found increasing expression. These are great gains in the spiritual progress of mankind. They have been slowly built into the fabric of tradition and institutions by the labours of past generations. What made our country go to war was that there appeared to be no other way of resisting a threat to trample underfoot these painfully won gains, and to substitute a conception of life which regards man as essentially a beast of prey and sweeps moral considerations on one side in the reckless pursuit of power.

Power is inseparable from every political structure. In the relations between nations the question is never one between might and right. It is always one between might directed to good or to bad ends. There is all the difference in the world between the sword as a principal means of action in the sheer pursuit of power and the sword held in reserve for the restraint of anti-social forces.

Power concentrated in a few hands is more dangerous than power more widely diffused and subject to various checks and balances. It is because of this diffusion of power, however imperfect, in democratic societies and because the western democracies have by long tradition learned something of the values of toleration and political liberty that there are grounds for believing it to be in the interests of mankind as a whole that the major voice in determining the future should rest with them and not with their opponents.

But if this position is to be maintained it calls for searching self-examination. The actual achievement of the British Empire is only a very partial embodiment of the ideals we profess. Because our practice is in many instances wholly at variance with our professions we are often regarded by other nations as hypocrites. In our government of other races we become easily satisfied with our good intentions, while those over whom we rule have to bear the sharp edge of our actual policies, which are often dictated by our interests.

TWO VITAL TRUTHS

In this fateful crisis in the history of mankind everything depends on our capacity to hold with equal firmness to two truths. First, that every practical achievement in subordinating power to moral restraint and guidance and in creating a tradition of settling differences by agreement and not by force is among the most precious possessions of mankind. The maintenance of that tradition is at stake in the present conflict. Selfish interest and moral purpose are mingled so inextricably in human affairs, and the latter may so readily be overborne by the former, that it is easy for the cynic to belittle the difference and find in history nothing but a struggle between non-moral forces. But on the recognition of the distinction and its embodiment in political institutions depends the question whether mankind will sink to a sub-human level or realise its spiritual destiny in the growth of moral responsibility both in individuals and in communities.

It is no less essential, on the other hand, to remember how precarious is our hold on the truths and values we are defending. They are not ours in any sense that makes us inherently superior to other peoples. They are the gifts of history and of grace. We are no more immune than others from succumbing to the temptations of power. These values are not resident in us; we have continually to recapture them by renewed acts of dedication. I am pleading that we should see the world as it is; if we face the truth about *ourselves*, we must recognise the terrific danger that, under the stress of war we should ourselves succumb to the spirit against which we are fighting. Only the grace of God can prevent it.

To defeat in war the sinister forces we are resisting will not in itself create a more

moral world. On the contrary, the fact that we have been drawn into a conflict of power will demand from us a new, *conscious*, spiritual effort if we are not to fall to a lower level and if in the future the relations between peoples are to be subordinated to spiritual purposes.

AN INTERNATIONAL ORDER

There is at the present time a babel of voices advocating every variety of blueprint for a new world order. It is the easiest thing in the world to draw up on paper a plan for a satisfactory society. The trouble is that reality refuses to conform to these intellectual patterns.

The chief weakness of many of these schemes is that they do not start far enough back or deep enough down. They take the nation-state for granted and proceed to plan for the union and co-operation in some form of existing States.

It is a serious question how far under modern conditions existing national units can survive as the real units of power. Their economic dependence on other nations may in many cases conflict with their formal sovereignty. A still more fundamental problem is that of the internal strains to which each nation is exposed in its own life. No scheme of organisation can get rid of real conflicts. If within the nation there are material or psychological needs which remain unsatisfied, there is always the danger that men may seek in war an escape from their frustrations. These are fundamental problems to which both the supporters of the League of Nations and the advocates of Federal Union are in danger of devoting too little attention.

Most of the discussions of an international order as a political problem fail to take account of the basic challenge ot Communism. This is not the place to discuss the nature of Communism. To many, particularly among the younger generation, it appears as the rallying point of social reconstruction; to others, as a repudiation of the moral and cultural values of Christendom. These questions must at some time engage our attention in the *News-Letter*. But the important point for our present purpose is that, while nationalistic power politics play a large part in present Russian policy, the ideas of Communism remain an active force and are disruptive of the national State. The major problem which may confront us in the not distant future may be not Nazi Germany, but international Communism.

Again, in planning for a new international order there remains the unknown quantity of the future of Germany itself. In what form, if this country and France win the war, will Germany emerge from the ordeal? It is too easily assumed in many quarters that if we act magnanimously we can hope to deal with a democratic, or at least a liberally minded, Germany taking its part in a community of Western peoples. But to suppose that because we desire this solution it is what will actually happen is mere wishful thinking. This is the fatal weakness in the view that what we are fighting for is to get rid of Hitlerism. Nobody's opinion in regard to what the womb of the future may bring forth can be more than a guess. But it would be rash to predict that out of the vortex of contending forces a democratic Germany is more likely to emerge than a dictatorship of the Right, or a dictatorship of the Left, or a Germany torn by conflicting factions, or a Germany split by internal disagreements into two or more separate States. We talk about our future relations with " Germany "—but what Germany?

THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF A WORLD ORDER

The most fundamental difficulty of all, however, that has to be faced is whether there exists at present any common purpose which makes a world order possible. The whole way of life in which most of us in Great Britain believe, and which we assume as the basis of a satisfactory international order, is explicitly rejected by the adherents of other systems. It is quite unreal to plan for an international order unless there is some body of commonly accepted ideas about the ends for which society exists. Lord Halifax uttered a bed-rock truth when he said, in his broadcast talk, that no plan will endure that does not freely spring from the will of the peoples who alone can give it life.

There is, however, a prior question. Have we a clearly conceived purpose for our own national life which we can effectively oppose to the Communist and Fascist conceptions? The rise of these systems raises in an acute form the question how society is held together. We are too prone to forget that democratic institutions are possible only where a fundamental agreement exists. Without an unorganised common basis of interests, habits, and aspirations democracy cannot work at all. There must be a basal agreement by whom and in what way differences are to be settled. Where this is lacking conflict grows in intensity till it reaches the verge of civil war. Then one party seizes power and puts down all opposition by force. Where the disposition to settle differences by agreement rather than by force is lacking, no legalistic machinery is strong enough to prevent recourse to violence. That is the fundamental problem of creating an international order. If we refuse to face it we shall be doomed to one disappointment after another.

Where a moral basis for a true international order is absent, the only means of preventing war is to try to maintain an equilibrium of contending forces. International politics in these circumstances *is* power politics. This does not mean that steps cannot be taken to mitigate the conflict of power. It does not mean, for example, that we should not as Christians urge upon our Government, if our country is victorious in the war, to refrain from vindictiveness, to seek a just settlement and to have regard not merely to national interests, but to the general good of the peoples of Europe and of the world as a whole. Nor does it mean that, if we sincerely stand for these things, we cannot expect that they will evoke a response among the German people. But we must pursue these aims because they are right, not because they will necessarily produce immediate results in the establishment of a genuine international order. The statesman has always to take account of the actual political forces with which he has to deal. If the pressure of idealistic opinion compels him to action which destroys the equilibrium of forces on which peace depends, the effect may be to precipitate the war which it was desired to avoid. This is an unpalatable truth because of our impatience to find some short and quick way of bringing reality into conformity with our ideals. It ought not to be unpalatable to Christians.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is that our expectations of what may be immediately achieved in the international sphere must be modest. We are not ready yet to build a true international order; the foundations have yet to be dug. We must not evade this reality by having recourse to expedients—and there are many offered to us—which buoy us up with hopes of a rapid overcoming of the difficulties but can in the end only deceive. The conclusion is discouraging only to those who, like a nervous patient, are afraid to learn the real nature of the disease from which they are suffering. Men of courage desire to know the worst in order that with the greater intelligence and determination they may attack the roots of the trouble.

There are doubtless other points of view besides that presented in this paper which need to be taken into account in the consideration of so vast a subject. But if we are to deal with a crisis as grave as the present, the first necessity is to get down to bedrock.

Is there, then, no immediate action that we can take? Undoubtedly there is. But I cannot deal with this question now, partly because the limits of space have been reached, and partly because it seems best to let the diagnosis stand by itself. Constructive action will be a subject which will engage our constant attention in succeeding issues of the *News-Letter*.

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